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 ACTION SS-25

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 O 072128Z DEC 78  
 FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8569  
 INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO NIACT IMMEDIATE

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DEPARTMENT FOR ASST. SECY VAKY

SANTIAGO FOR AMB. LANDAU

E.O. 12065 XDS-3 12/7/08 (CASTRO, RAUL) OR-L  
 TAGS PBOR, AR, CI  
 SUBJECT BEAGLE CHANNEL: IMPENDING MILITARY HOSTILITIES

1. WHILE THE FINAL DECISION PROBABLY HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE, I AM CONVINCED THAT THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES WILL INITIATE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST CHILE, MOST LIKELY MOVING AGAINST CHILEN HELD ISLANDS TO THE SOUTH OF THE BEAGLE CHANNEL--UNLESS CHILE COMES TO THE DECEMBER 12 TALKS=PREPARED TO DEAL FORTHRIGHTLY WITH THE ISSUES. GENERAL SUAREZ MASON TOLD ME POINT BLANK THIS AFTERNOON (SEPTEL) THAT ARGENTINA WILL OCCUPY THREE UNIDENTIFIED ISLANDS ON THE 15TH IF THE CHILEANS DO NOT COME TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE DECEMBER 12 PREPARED TO GIVE UP BARNEVELT, EVOUT AND HALF OF CAPE HORN ISLAND. I CANNOT ATTEST THAT THIS IS ARGENTINA'S BOTTOM LINE, BUT I DO NOT THINK SUAREZ MASON IS BLUFFING. ALL OF OUR MILITARY SOURCES ARE ECHOING THE SAME LINE (ESTIMATES FOR THE INITIATION OF HOSTILITIES VARYING FROM THE 13TH TO THE 15TH OF DECEMBER) WHICH REFLECTS THE SENSE OF DETERMINATION

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IN THE ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE TO THE SATISFACTION OF SELF-PERCEIVED BASIC INTERESTS.

2. THE ARGENTINE MILITARY CHIEFS ARE PROCEEDING DOWN A PATH WHICH MOST LIKELY WILL LEAD ONLY TO A PROLONGED INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC WRANGLE, FURTHER FRUSTRATIONS AND VERY LIKELY A TAKEOVER OF THE GOVERNMENT BY THE MOST HARD LINE ELEMENTS IN THE ARMED FORCES. IN ADDITION TO THE INSTABILITY WHICH SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD CREATE IN THE SOUTHERN CONE, THE REPLACEMENT OF GENERALS VIDELA AND VIOLA BY THE HARD LINE WARLORDS WOULD DO IRREPARABLE HARM TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REDEMOCRATIZATION INTERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

3. A TOP LEVEL EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO HEAD OFF THIS CONFLICT. I RECOMMEND THAT THE WHITE HOUSE (PREFERABLY THE PRESIDENT; IF NOT, THEN THE VICE PRESIDENT) TELEPHONE GENERALS VIDELA AND PINOCHET BY THIS WEEKEND IMPRESSING BOTH SIDES WITH THE INEVITABLY SOMBER CONSEQUENCES OF A MILITARY CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~

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IPS by  Date \_\_\_\_\_

Declassified Case: 17X-57067 Date: 06-05-2013

COUNTRIES. PLAYING ON ARGENTINA'S CONCERN ABOUT ITS EXPOSED, LIGHTLY DEFENDED NORTHERN FLANKS AND UNCERTAINTY OVER HOW BRAZIL MIGHT ULTIMATELY REACT TO AN ARGENTINE-CHILEAN CONFLICT, THE WHITE HOUSE SHOULD WARN VIDELA OF THE DANGERS OF LIMITED ARGENTINE MILITARY ACTION SPREADING INTO A GENERALIZED CONFLICT IN THE SOUTHERN CONE. PINOCHET SHOULD BE TOLD THAT, WHILE WE DO NOT BACK ARGENTINE CLAIMS, THE "RESIGNED" ATTITUDE OF THE CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTER AS EXPRESSED IN SANTIAGO'S 9279, WILL BE SEEN IN

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BUENOS AIRES AS A PROVOCATION, AND THAT CHILE MAY SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONFLICT IN THE EYES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IF IT FAILS TO EXPLORE ALL POSSIBLE AVENUES TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.  
CASTRO

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